

Les Whitten
1401 16 St., NW
Wash, D.C. 20036

9/13/77

Dear Les,

I'll probably phone you later this morning about this. I write on the chance you are away or out and because I want a record for Jim Lesar, who is familiar with parts of what follows.

I think there is another story in your today's column on Manfred Baron. I also think I know (in the sense of a) having seen and b) about) Baron as "Fat Man Williams." Perhaps "Fat Man Williamson."

If I am correct I have a friendly relationship with his lawyer of that period and he was where no federal informant should have been the last half of October 1974.

He was in the same special Memphis County jail's cell with James Earl Ray.

That cell was originally about 6 cells made over into a special holding tank, all outside view blacked by special steel plates as directed by the U.S. Bureau of Prisons. It was air conditioned but Fat Man walked around in it in his underwear. He really is incredibly fat, as Jim should remember. We both saw him the first day Ray was there. By the way, John Ray was also in the same cell. The U.S. Marshal, who impressed me very favorably, told me he arranged it for compassionate reasons. I can still believe it.

All the Rays are petty criminals but John's story is scarier. There is a pretty good case that the FBI framed him and that he continues to be treated unjustly. Jim has this more than I now. I merely began it and turned it over to him.

If the prosecution had not been treating me like the Nixon gang thought of Ellsberg I'd not have had time to learn about Fat Man. However, they kept the pressure on, made the threats overtly, so I felt I had to take the initiative to get them off my back so I could work. There was more than Jim and I could do - or were able to.

I had looked Jay Fred Friedman up on earlier trips to Memphis because he had been co-counsel for the man I nicknamed Bourbon Charlie, the only claimed King assassination eye-witness who was a witness to nothing. I like Jay Fred and he impressed me as a good criminal lawyer. So when Henry Haile and his Oreo Haynes were pulling these tricks and made overt threats to "get" me, I decided I needed counsel other than Ray's. I therefore phoned Jay Fred. It was the Sunday of a holiday weekend. Bud was in prison, Jim and I were at the Albert Pick. Jay Fred phoned me from the lobby, which was within view of all those who always reported to the local prosecution (in return for all the business with sequestered juries - they even opened Jim's mail from the Supreme Court) and then came up to our connecting rooms, leaving his wife and youngest son in the lobby. Oh, yes, the state AG's people were in the same motel and knew the Friedmans. Jay Fred said my room was bugged, checked the phone and found it clear, and then said let's walk outside where we can be private. He led me to his wife and son, introduced us and then he and I alone walked onto the Pick's parking lot and spoke about the situation for maybe a half hour. He said okay, he'd represent me and if anything happened it would be fun. Told me how to reach him because of his in-court schedule and then asked me I'd care to share their left-over venison. I needed a night off so I gladly accepted. We walked back to the front of the motel, which has a long sidewalk beginning at the corner. As we got to this corner Mrs. Friedman, a beautiful young woman, was there. She slipped up to me from my right, gave me the biggest smile as she slipped her left arm around my waist, told me to do the same with her and ask she said this through a wide grin she put her head on my shoulder. I was taken quite by surprise. I did exactly as she said not knowing why for a short while. Once I looked toward where we were walking, the main entrance, I saw why. It was like from a movie. There, his eyes fairly bugging out of his head, was Oreo William Joe Haynes of the State DA's office.

It was a very pleasant evening in all ways. Both Fritzdans are excellent cooks. They have the finest wine cellar I've ever seen. It is an air-conditioned part of the home they built, above ground.

Before Jay Fred was in his office the next morning the State AG had phoned three or four times to ask what he and I were doing together. Jim has a friend who happened to be there doing some legal research. Finally Jay Fred took the call and murmured only that he had wanted to meet the man whose investigation had reopened the case and that we had a pleasant evening. They pressed him, got nothing, but thereafter hassled me no more. They ~~xxx~~ merely had Jim and me under unhidden surveillance. I think it more likely this was by the Memphis cops and the reports are one of the reasons those intelligence/inspectional unit files had to be destroyed when they were about to be forced open by court action.

Anyway, once I had spotted the very spottable Fat Man I had made inquiries and had discussed him with Jay Fred. My recollection includes no suggestion of any cooperation with the federals as of then. It includes some pretty vicious exploits by a very bad man. The one I remember clearly is what he did to a young whore he enticed to spend a long weekend with him. He took her to Dallas under promises of a large fee. She kept ~~xxx~~ demanding money from him and he kept telling her to be patient, that he'd really fix her up on Monday. When she left he gave her a charge card and said "Baby, enjoy it." She went out, used it and got arrested. It was a stolen one.

I had other conversations with and interests in Jay Fred but do not want to go into them now. I have to regard anything between him and me as confidential unless he says otherwise. If you want to get in touch with him I'll do it for you or tell you how. As of my last information he had decided to change his practice from expertise in criminal, with the best or best-paying criminals as clients, into more placid business practice. He also then left the more lavish offices I knew. My belief is that if he wanted to talk or could he'd know more about organized crime in that part of the Mississippi valley than anyone you might find outside the official sources who seem to have been helpful to you in a way that makes me wonder how Fat Man will survive it - or why he ran this risk.

Of course I have a question about what this did to the functioning of the system of justice, to Ray's ability to enjoy the theoretical rights he in actuality did not have. I knew Fat Man as The Dixie Mafia but not as an informer. If I wondered then about having both Rays confined with one like him, I wonder more now with your today's exposure.

That special tank was bugged and equipped for videotaping. The cameras had been removed but the steel mounds were in place when I was last there. I think at least one of the overt microphones ~~was~~ was visible. Both systems were on constantly when Ray was originally confined there. About the summer of 1971 I taped interviews with two hardened criminals in Brushy Mountain maximum-security pen. Both independently gave me consistent accounts of continued electronic surveillance in that tank and how they knew and could prove it. I told Paul Valentine who could not go farther with that when the sheriff denied it. With all the advance notice and the necessary preparations I'd be surprised if, with the wiring all in place, there were not electronic surveillance in that tank. They did a lot of it in Memphis. I know from an unimpeachable source that they had Percy Foreman's quarters wired and from a good source that the mayor even had the copy tap the DA's office.

Hastily,